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Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 29-45 March 29, 1919

THE MATRILINEAL COMPLEX

BY
ROBERT H. LOWIE

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THE MATRILINEAL COMPLEX

BY
ROBERT H. LOWIE

Dr. Hartland has recently reopened discussion of a question which has for a number of years been regarded as closed by American ethnologists—the relative priority of matrilineal and patrilineal institutions.[1] It is always desirable to reëxamine from time to time the fundamental conceptions of a science, and a challenge to accepted theories often leads to a remarkable illumination of basic principles. The main objection to Dr. Hartland's essay on "Matrilineal Kinship and the Question of Its Priority" must rest not on his refusal to bow to the established American view, but on his inadmissible method of approach.

Dr. Hartland defends two important propositions. In the first place, he believes that "normally and apart from a few exceptions that seem well established, kinship was originally reckoned on one side only" (p. 24). Secondly, he contends that descent through the mother regularly preceded descent through the father. The first of these contentions seems to me singularly ill-founded, inasmuch as we find almost uniformly that the tribes on the lowest level of civilization, whether Andaman Islanders, Sakai, or Plateau Shoshoneans, lack the unilateral mode of reckoning kinship. However, at present I am concerned solely with the second of Dr. Hartland's propositions.

But before entering into a discussion of his method of proof, I must deal with a matter of terminology. In America it has been customary of late to refer to matrilineal social units as "clans" and to patrilineal groups as "gentes." This involves the unfortunate lack of a generic term for a unilateral group regardless of mode of descent. Moreover, such usage conflicts both with Lewis H. Morgan's use of gens in the generic sense, and the generic use of clan firmly established

[1] E. S. Hartland, Matrilineal Kinship and the Question of its Priority, Mem. Am. Anthr. Assoc., IV, 1–90, 1917.

among English writers. In an elementary course on anthropology at the University of California, I eliminated these difficulties by consistently employing the term "kin" generically, and "mother-kin" or "father-kin" by way of specification. Since then, however, Drs. Goddard and Kroeber have pointed out the misleading connotations of the term kin when technically restricted to the unilateral (and normally exogamous) group. Accordingly, I will substitute the old term "sib," which has recently been resuscitated in Professor Philbrick's translation of Huebner's *History of Germanic Private Law.*

How, then, does Dr. Hartland establish the conclusion that existing father-sibs have grown out of mother-sibs, thus converting an observed simultaneity into a chronological sequence? His own statements leave no doubt whatsoever as to his method of procedure. He determines first "what are the chief characteristics of the matrilineal organization of society" (p. 7). This is accomplished "by taking a people in which that organization is exhibited in the full strength and noting its peculiarities" (*ibid.*). When subsequently such features are encountered in combination with patrilineal descent they are interpreted as "survivals of matrilineal polity" (p. 23).

The logical error involved in this procedure is patent. Dr. Hartland is obliged to introduce in the place of mere matrilineal descent, about which the discussion revolves, the very different concept of a matrilineal *complex;* and that complex he establishes not by empirical observation but by selecting a people in which it is supposed to be exhibited in its full strength. This estimate as to the vigor of matrilineal organization is clearly arbitrary; Dr. Hartland has rationalistically constructed an organization such as might logically follow from matrilineal descent and then finds a few concrete illustrations of this purely a priori conception, from which in turn he deduces the traits of the mother-sib. The task of the critical ethnologist is very different. Starting from the one pivotal feature of maternal descent, he must establish by empirical observation what other features appear in combination with the mother-sib. This is the only possibility of establishing the facts in the case.

Now what are the traits which Dr. Hartland deduces as symptomatic of the typical matrilineal organizations? Essentially his enumeration (p. 10) coincides with Tylor's earlier statement.[2] According to both writers, the mother-sib, defined by matrilineal descent, is further distinguished by matrilocal residence; the inherit-

[2] Jour. Enthr. Inst., XVIII, 252, 1889.

ance of property within the sib; and matrilineal authority vested more particularly in the mother's brother. In the present paper I shall discuss first the alleged correlation between matrilineal descent and matrilocal residence, and shall supplement this inquiry with a corresponding examination of the avunculate and matrilineal inheritance, two institutions which are best considered in conjunction.

Starting our survey with North America, we find four regions with matrilineal descent—an appreciable part of the Atlantic population (embracing notably the Iroquois and the Southeastern tribes); three Northern Plains tribes, the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Crow; the Pueblo Indians; and some of the Northwest Coast Indians. What are the ascertainable facts with reference to residence?

As to the Iroquois, Morgan's statements are hardly sufficiently explicit, but they suggest that the bride took up her abode with the groom's relatives. Our author represents the bride as conducted to the home of her intended husband, where she presents some bread to her mother-in-law as proof of her domestic accomplishments, while the husband's mother returns some venison to the girl's mother "as an earnest of his ability to provide for his household."[3] On the other hand, the Southeastern tribes obviously practiced matrilocal residence to some degree. Dr. John R. Swanton informs me that among the Creek the women stayed in one place and their husbands came there from other localities, the houses of women of the same clan being built in immediate proximity to one another. This scheme, according to the same authority, seems to have prevailed likewise among the Timucua of Florida. Similarly, the Choctaw men of Bayou Lacomb, Louisiana, lived in their wives' villages.[4] Among the Yuchi there was no obligatory rule. A woman normally left her home and the husband built a house for the new couple; but "sometimes the man goes to live with his wife's parents *until he is able to start for himself.*"[5]

For the three Plains tribes the data are fairly definite. The Mandan youth often remained in his father-in-law's lodge, but frequently a new hut was constructed.[6] Similarly the Hidatsa had no absolute rule, though *in the beginning* the young couple generally remained with the wife's parents, the husband acting as their servant

[3] L. H. Morgan, League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, Lloyd ed., I, 313, 1904.

[4] D. I. Bushnell, The Choctaw of Bayou Lacomb, St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana, Bur. Am. Ethn., Bull. 48, p. 27, 1909.

[5] F. G. Speck, Ethnology of the Yuchi Indians, p. 95, 1909. Italics inserted by the author.

[6] Maximilian, Reise in das innere Nord-America in den Jahren 1832 bis 1834, II, 128, 1839.

and hunter.[7] Among the Crow, on the other hand, wedlock generally began with patrilocal residenee.[8]

The Pueblo Indians of Arizona and New Mexico form the classical example of matrilocal abode. Among the Hopi the house belongs to the woman, and the daughter after marriage lives with her husband under her mother's roof.[9] The identical scheme prevails among the Zuñi[10] and the Sia.[11] But this is not the usage of the nomadic Navaho: "In the absence of the husband," say our most trustworthy authorities, "the mother pays her daughter an oecasional visit."[12] The Apaehe eustom differs from this, yet without conforming to the Pueblo practice. "The young man lived with his father-in-law *for some time* and hunted for the support of the family."[13]

There remain the Pacific Coast people. According to Krause, the Tlingit had both matrilocal and patrilocal unions, while Swanton's account strongly suggests the preponderance of the latter.[14] The Haida data are unusually illuminating. A boy beeame engaged between fifteen and eighteen and during the period of *betrothal* he lived with his fianeée's family, working for them *until* his marriage. But at the wedding eeremony the father of the girl politely disparaged her abilities, adding that "he knew that her future mother-in-law would take eare of her, he was glad that his daughter was going to live with the young man's sisters," ete.[15] For the Tsimshian we have recent information to the effect that "the bride is earried down to the canoe, and she departs with her husband to his village, where they live. If the groom belongs to the same village, the eouple often stay with the girl's parents."[16]

The faets for North Ameriea are readily summarized. Matrilocal residenee in an unequivocal form exists only in two matronymic eenters—among the Pueblo Indians and among the Creek. Elsewhere sueh praetiee is eonfined either to the earliest period of wedlock or the preeeding eondition of betrothal, and bears on its faee the clearest

7 Lowie, Notes on the Social Organization and Customs of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Crow Indians, p. 46, 1917.

8 Lowie, Social Life of the Crow Indians, p. 223, 1912.

9 W. Hough, The Hopi Indians, p. 127, 1915.

10 M. C. Stevenson, The Zuñi Indians, p. 305, 1904.

11 M. C. Stevenson, The Sia, p. 22, 1894.

12 The Franciscan Fathers, An Ethnologic Dictionary of the Navaho Language, p. 449, 1910.

13 P. E. Goddard, Indians of the Southwest, p. 162, 1913.

14 A. Krause, Die Tlinkit-Indianer, p. 220, 1885; Swanton, 26th Ann. Rep. Bur. Am. Ethn., p. 428, 1908.

15 J. R. Swanton, Contributions to the Ethnology of the Haida, pp. 50, 51, 1905.

16 F. Boas, Tsimshian Mythology, p. 532, 1916.

evidence of association with a rendering of services by way of compensation. Moreover, patrilocal residence occurs among tribes with mother-sibs, and in a number of instances both modes of residence exist side by side without any suggestion that either is deemed preferable.

It is very interesting to note that while mother-sibs are not infrequently consistent with patrilocal residence, a patrilineal scheme or loose organization often appears with matrilocal residence or indications thereof. Thus the Blackfoot felt that the father-in-law was for a time entitled to part of the spoils of the chase and war, especially the latter.[17] Similarly, without actual matrilocal residence, the Omaha husband labors on behalf of his father-in-law for the period of one or two years.[18] With the Arapaho the new couple occupy indeed a tent of their own, but it is pitched by the lodge of the bride's father.[19] Cheyenne usage seems to be strictly parallel to that of the Arapaho.[20] Among the Gros Ventre a bridegroom often settled with his father-in-law.[21] The Eastern Dakota practiced both customs with apparently equal frequency; and the same applies to the Assiniboine.[22] Matrilocal residence as a normal usage of the Eastern Cree is vouched for by some of the early travelers.[23] Finally may be cited some—though by no means all—of the Central Eskimo communities, where housekeeping regularly begins with the bride's family.[24]

This list, which could undoubtedly be materially increased, will of course be greeted by adherents of the good old school as so many symptoms of a former mother-sib scheme. An auxiliary hypothesis can always be framed to account for disconcerting facts. We, however, are concerned here with ascertaining the *empirical* data without encumbering our statement with any questionable assumption; and accordingly, our survey establishes the indisputable fact that many matrilineal tribes practice patrilocal residence, while on the other hand, some form of matrilocal residence is frequently linked with father-sibs.

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[17] C. Wissler, The Social Life of the Blackfoot Indians, p. 10, 1911.

[18] A. C. Fletcher and F. La Flesche, The Omaha Tribe, p. 324, 1911.

[19] A. L. Kroeber, The Arapaho, p. 12, 1902.

[20] E. S. Curtis, The North American Indian, VI, 157, 1911.

[21] Kroeber, Ethnology of the Gros Ventre, p. 180, 1908.

[22] S. R. Riggs, Dakota Grammar, Texts, and Ethnology, p. 205, 1893; Lowie, The Assiniboine, pp. 40, 41, 1909.

[23] A. Skinner, Notes on the Eastern Cree and Northern Saulteaux, p. 57, 1911; Franklin, Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea, III, Everyman's Library ed., p. 66.

[24] Boas, The Central Eskimo, p. 579, 1888.

The conclusions reached for North America must be tested by data from other divisions of the globe. Turning next to Melanesia as one of the best studied regions of Oceania, we find that in the groups investigated by Codrington the young man regularly takes his wife to his own or to his father's house.[25] To Dr. Rivers' Oceanian researches we are indebted for a quite general statement on the subject:

> . . . there is little doubt it is usual throughout Melanesia for a married couple to live with the husband's people. . . . There is thus evidence that even in the part of Melanesia which has social institutions of the most archaic kind, there is no association of matrilocal marriage with matrilineal descent.[26]

What is true for Melanesia holds so generally in Australia that Dr. Hartland is constrained to admit "the practically universal custom of taking the wife to reside with her husband."[27]

Finally, we may consider the data from Africa. Unfortunately this still remains for sociological purposes the Dark Continent. At least I have failed to gain a comprehensive picture of rules of descent and residence and am obliged to present random findings. In that portion of the Ewe nation visited by Ellis matronymy was coupled with patrilocal abode.[28] Of the Bantu the Bakongo are likewise matronymic and patrilocal,[29] and this applies also to the Herero.[30] The Ovambo differ from their neighbors inasmuch as female descent is here associated with a *preliminary* matrilocal residence during which the wife's parents are masters of the situation; but when the young husband is about thirty he establishes a settlement of his own and gains his independence.[31] Finally, I may cite the Makonde case from East Africa, where a young man marries his maternal uncle's daughter and lives near her father.[32]

We may now summarize our total results. The Australian and Melanesian facts lend no support whatsoever to the theory that maternal descent is regularly accompanied by the matrilocal factor. The African and American data are slightly more favorable but by no means warrant the dictum that matrilocal residence is a symptom of matronymy.

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[25] R. H. Codrington, The Melanesians, pp. 238ff., 1891.

[26] W. H. R. Rivers, The History of Melanesian Society, II, 126, 1914.

[27] Hartland, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[28] A. B. Ellis, The Ewe-speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa, pp. 157, 207, 1890.

[29] A. Weeks, Among the Primitive Bakongo, pp. 145–147, 1914.

[30] W. Schinz, Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika, pp. 163, 172, 1891.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 304, 311.

[32] K. Weule, Negerleben in Ostafrika, p. 383, 1909.

This conclusion does not oblige us to abandon altogether Tylor's suggestion that mode of residence is connected with rules of descent.[33] Possibly in a number of instances the retention of a girl by her family after the Hopi and Zuñi fashion led to reckoning her children as members of the group of the house owner. But since that retention is so rarely protracted beyond the initial stage of wedlock, the hypothesis, with all its seductive plausibility, seems to be of limited applicability. Perhaps it would be better to divide sharply cases of permanent and of temporary abode with the woman's kindred. We might then find that the former category is uniformly, or nearly so, associated with matronymy. But in what part of the world except the southwest of North America and possibly the Khasi of Assam does permanent matrilocal residence occur? At present it therefore seems best to lump together all our cases under a single heading and make some estimate of the strength of the tested correlation. There is so much difficulty in weighting our geographical units and the distinction between temporary and permanent matrilocal residence that I will refrain from venturing on a mathematical computation. But as a guess I should say that the coefficient, instead of approximating one hundred per cent would be much nearer to ten per cent on the most favorable view of the case.

Let us next turn to the customs embraced under the term "avunculate." In what sense is it possible to treat these as symptomatic of the matrilineal complex? That is, to what extent are mother-sibs connected with avuncular authority or an altogether distinctive relationship between mother's brother and sister's son?

The avunculate in North America is described by Morgan in a significant passage:

> He is, practically, rather more the head of his sister's family than his sister's husband. . . . Amongst the Choctas, for example, if a boy is to be placed at school his uncle, instead of his father, takes him to the mission and makes the arrangement. An uncle, among the Winnebagoes, may require services of a nephew, or administer correction, which his own father would neither ask nor attempt. In like manner with the Iowas and Otoes, an uncle may appropriate to his own use his nephew's horse or his gun, or other personal property, without being questioned, which his own father would have no recognized right to do. But over his nieces this same authority is more significant, from his participation in their marriage contracts, which, in many Indian nations, are founded upon a consideration in the nature of presents.[34]

[33] Jour. Anthr. Inst., XVIII, 258, 1889.

[34] L. H. Morgan, Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity, p. 158, 1871.

With reference to the Winnebago, Morgan's statement has since been verified and supplemented.

> A man can take liberties with his maternal uncle which are expressly prohibited with his paternal uncle and aunt and his maternal aunt. Yet in spite of this freedom a man and his maternal uncle stand in particularly close relationship, the former always acting in the capacity of a servant. On the war-path, particularly, this relationship is shown in its strongest phase, for then the nephew . . . must accompany him as a sort of esquire and suffer himself to be slain should his maternal uncle . . . be slain or captured.[35]

According to a remark of Tom Bear to the present writer, the Winnebago nephew may appropriate any part of his uncle's property. For another Siouan tribe we likewise possess corroborative data. Among the Omaha the nephew was permitted to jest familiarly with his uncle; on the other hand the maternal uncle had full control of the children after the parents' death and even during their lifetime was "as alert as their father to defend the children or to avenge a wrong done them."[36] Unpublished data by Murie indicate like usages among the neighboring Pawnee, while Skinner's observations indicate that the Menomini have a usage somewhat similar to the Winnebago.[37]

Now it should be noted that of all the examples of the avunculate cited above, the only one to the point is that of the Choctaw. All the other tribes mentioned are either patrilineally organized or, as in the Pawnee case, lack a definite sib system. If, instead of looking for evidences of peculiar avuncular relations, we correlate mother-sibs and the avunculate we get the following results. Among the Iroquois there is no evidence of the avunculate, while for the southeastern peoples we have Morgan's statement as to the Choctaw. In the Northern Plains group traces of the custom are lacking. Southwestern tribes vary in their practices. In the Hopi household the mother's brother certainly plays an important rôle, especially with reference to ceremonial matters; and this remark applies equally to the Tewa enclave in Hopiland.[38] On the other hand, I can find no indications that corresponding customs are shared by the Navaho or even the Zuñi. The one perfect illustration of the avunculate in connection with maternal descent in North America is furnished by the North

[35] P. Radin, Am. Anthr., n.s. XII, 213, 214, 1910.

[36] J. O. Dorsey, 3d Ann. Rep. Bur. Am. Ethn., pp. 265, 270, 1884; Fletcher and La Flesche, *ibid.*, 27th Ann. Rep., p. 325, 1909.

[37] Skinner, Social Life and Ceremonial Bundles of the Menomini Indians, p. 20, 1913.

[38] The writer's observations; B. W. Freire-Marreco, Am. Anthr., n.s. XV., 281, 282, 1914.

West Coast tribes, where the nephew lives with his uncle, works for him, marries his daughter (or, it may be, his widow) and is regarded as his successor.[39]

Some tendency for avuncular customs to appear with matronymy is thus apparent, but in other cases they are lacking; and they even appear with father-sibs. Since we are interested in an empirical determination of the facts, the popular theory of survivals as to the last mentioned group of cases is inapplicable as it was in our parallel findings with reference to residence.

Turning from America to Melanesia, we have abundant evidence of the avunculate among those natives of this region who have been most thoroughly studied. For example, we find that in the Banks Islands the nephew obeys his maternal uncle more readily than his father and treats him altogether with greater reverence; at one time he was, indeed, the legitimate heir of his possessions and was even entitled to appropriate whatever he desired of such property during his uncle's lifetime. Similar customs are noted in the New Hebrides and Torres Islands, but it is not a little remarkable that the highest development of relevant usages is represented by the *vasu* institutions of the non-matronymic Fijians.[40] When we discover a hardly less pronounced avunculate among the Polynesian Tongans and distinct traces of the custom among the Samoans, our knowledge of tribal relations suggests an interpretation very different from that of current survivalist dogmatism. If Fiji forms one center of diffusion for the practice, then its relative strength in Tonga and Samoa is precisely what we should expect on the theory of borrowing. In short, the Tongans and Samoans display avuncular features not because they ever passed through a matrilineal stage but because they have been in contact with a people where the avunculate flourished to an excessive degree.

It would, I think, be rash to deny categorically that in certain parts of Melanesia where mother-sibs are not observable avuncular practices are survivals of a one-time matrilineal system. This may even apply to Fiji, though this seems more problematical. However, it is worth while to contrast survivalist logic as applied to the Melanesian and the North American field. In Melanesia we find definitely matrilineal peoples practicing avuncular customs in logical consonance with their social organization. Consequently, when other members of the same

[39] Boas, 31st Ann. Rep. Bur. Am. Ethn., p. 425, 1916.

[40] Rivers, The History of Melanesian Society, I, 37, 204, 291, 366; II, 18, 155–160.

linguistic and cultural group show these customs without the frequently associated type of organization it is not improbable that that type once existed where it is no longer observed. But the North American case differs *toto coelo* from this. In the Siouan family, for example, it is precisely the matrilineal groups that lack, and the patrilineal ones that exhibit, avuncular features; and the same applies, if we shift the comparison, from the Siouan stock to the Plains culture area. The logic of the two cases is thus very different. Altogether I may register my opinion that Melanesia is the one part of the globe where the substitution of a patrilineal for a matrilineal system has been fairly well established.

In theoretical discussions of social organization, data from Australia play a ludicrously disproportionate part. No doubt the psychological effect wrought by a thick as compared with a moderately sized volume and by books issued from the press of commercial publishers as contrasted with the monographs due to scientific institutions is largely to blame. However this may be, it cannot be too vehemently or too often stated that our knowledge of the island continent is extremely inadequate. Spencer and Gillen give us satisfactory information on two or at most three tribes; while Howitt's work is for the most part a pioneer's compilation, commendable as a first skimming of the ground, but hardly more. To be sure, Roth's studies on Queensland are excellent and A. R. Brown's researches in West Australia give promise of what trained inquirers will ultimately achieve. But altogether Australia is remarkably little known and the theorizer would do well to wait for the field worker's garnering of facts. Accordingly, it is not possible to give a comprehensive view of the maternal uncle's place in Australian society. That in various communities definite social functions belong to him, is certainly true; but these are not limited by any means to matrilineal groups, and on the other hand similar functions go with entirely different relationships. I find no trace of matrilineal inheritance or succession to office, and the only suggestion of avuncular authority reported from matronymic groups lies in the right of betrothal exercised by the mother's brother over his niece among the Dieri and two or three even less known tribes.[41] Of the altogether unique avuncular relationship recorded, for example, among the Tlingit, the Banks Islanders, and the Thonga, nothing seems to be known in Australia.

[41] N. W. Thomas, Kinship Organizations and Group Marriage in Australia, p. 22, 1906.

Finally we may turn to Africa. Avuncular institutions have been recorded from various parts of this continent and doubtless from many tribes besides those for which I have found definite data. Of the Southern Bantu the Herero have matrilineal inheritance in such a form that while the brother of the deceased is the first claimant, the sister's son becomes heir in the absence of brothers.[42] For two of the eastern tribes we have very specific data. With the Yao inheritance is from uncle to sister's son, while among the Makonde we find in addition that the mother's brother must grant his consent to a girl's marriage and is entitled to a portion of the bride price.[43] The Bakongo regard a woman's eldest brother as master of her children, while the nephews succeed to the uncle's property and, brothers failing, to his office.[44] In Upper Guinea the Anglo-Ewe grant greater prerogatives as to children to the maternal uncle than to the father.[45] Since the nephew is the heir apparent his uncle expects in return adequate work during his lifetime. The boy must accordingly accompany the uncle on his travels, carrying provisions, cowrie shells and objects for barter. Incidentally he acquires the art of trading, the technique of weaving, and other useful accomplishments.

Here we are again confronted, however, with the fact that institutions identical or very similar flourish in equal measure among sibless or patronymic groups. Thus, the relations between mother's brother and sister's son are peculiarly intimate in the Hottentot country—closer than any except those obtaining between parents and children. To be sure, there has not been observed any matrilineal inheritance rule, but the uncle is at liberty to appropriate any of his nephew's damaged property, while the sister's son indemnifies himself by freely seizing perfectly uninjured possessions of his uncle. For example, while a man had taken his nephew's horse, which had defective hoofs, the young man coolly appropriated by way of compensation a milch cow, her calf, and ten goats.[46] The altogether unique position of the *malume* in Thonga society has become familiar through Junod's fascinating account. Here the mother's brother lays claim to a portion of the bride price and plays an important part in ceremonial activities, while the nephews exercise *vasu*-like privileges,

[42] Schinz, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

[43] Weule, Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse meiner ethnographischen Forschungsreise in den Südosten Deutsch-Ostafrikas, pp. 58, 96, 97, 124, 1908.

[44] Weeks, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

[45] G. Härtter, Sitten und Gebräuche der Angloer, Zeitschr. f. Ethn., XXXVIII, 43, 1906.

[46] L. Schultze, Aus Namaland und Kalahari, p. 303, 1907.

being permitted to appropriate his food, and may even inherit one of his wives.[47] With the presumably Hamitic Nandi the maternal uncle must give his consent before the boy is subjected to circumcision or other bodily mutilations; he normally receives a cow when his nephew has undertaken a successful raid; and his curse is believed to have the most deadly effect. "The most terrible thing that can happen to a Nandi is to displease his maternal uncle."[48]

Summing up the facts relating to the avunculate, we are again driven to the conclusion that a ten per cent correlation probably is all that can be demonstrated on empirical grounds. For an empirical proof of Dr. Hartland's contentions, the avuncular institutions are too frequently lacking in matronymic communities, they are far too frequently combined with a patrilineal scheme. It is only by assuming beforehand the theory that is to be proved, that the latter group of data can be construed into the opposite of their face value.

As a matter of fact, no less than three distinct alternatives to the survival theory suggest themselves with reference to the avuncular customs when imbedded in a patrilineal complex. In the first place, instead of pointing to a pristine matrilineal society they may merely represent borrowed elements dissociated from the particular matrilineal context that occurs in a neighboring group. I have already illustrated this assumption with Melanesian data. An additional example is furnished by a Papuan tribe. The Kai are not divided into exogamous sibs of any kind, yet a keen missionary observer notes that maternal uncles are entitled to the bride price and continue to exercise control over their niece; that, moreover, while succession to chieftainship is from father to son, the sister's son takes office when issue is lacking.[49] Matronymic tribes possessing the characteristic features found occur in such close proximity to the Kai that transmission readily accounts for the phenomena.

The second alternative has been suggested by Dr. Rivers. Where the avunculate is linked with cross-cousin marriage of the more common type, the question arises whether the altogether peculiar relationship between uncle and nephew does not simply result from that between a man and his prospective son-in-law. It is not difficult to understand that a very special bond would unite a boy with the father of his future wife. This explanation is naturally of restricted application but merges into an interpretation of generalized type.

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[47] H. A. Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, I, 44, 226, 253, 212, 255, 262, 1912.

[48] A. C. Hollis, The Nandi, p. 94, 1909.

[49] C. Keysser *in* Neuhauss, R., Deutsch-Neu-Guinea, III, 85–89, 100, 1911.

In almost every case where primitive tribes have been exhaustively studied it has been found that various relationships are associated with definite rights and duties. The avuncular relationship forms only one of a whole series of more or less analogous relationships and must be so viewed lest its importance be grossly exaggerated. Thus we find that among the "typically" matrilineal Hopi the naming of a child is a prerogative of the *father's* female relatives. Is this a survival of some earlier patrilineal society subsequently superseded by present conditions through some Amazonian *coup d'état?* We might easily contribute to the stock of anthropological romance by developing this hypothesis in some detail and should only be employing the type of logic popular among advocates of matrilineal priority. Or are we perchance face to face with a transitional condition through which the Hopi are beginning to grope towards father-right? No assumption could be less founded in reason. The Hopi are as matronymic and avuncular as they ever were; and the chances are that the naming custom is as old as any of these other institutions.

Similar facts may be cited for the Hidatsa and Crow. With these strictly matronymic peoples the paternal relatives nevertheless play a perfectly definite part in the individual's social life. A Crow treated his father's brothers and other clansmen with respect and regularly invited them to feasts. When an occasion arose for giving away presents, the father's brothers and sisters were considered as recipients before every one else. When a man returned from a successful raid, he gave away some of his horses to a father's clansman. The sons and daughters of a father's clansman were the joking-relatives possessed of altogether distinctive privileges. Nicknames were derived from the actions of a father's clansman, and so might be also names of honor. The father's clansmen rejoiced over a young man's success in war and would chant laudatory songs. Among the closely related Hidatsa the number of patrilineal functions is even greater. In addition to practically all the above mentioned usages we find the father's clan-mates conducting the funeral and bestowing new names; while in the series of graded societies individuals purchased regalia from a father's clan-mate. The emphasis on the father's side of the family is so strong among these two tribes that it might plausibly be exploited on behalf of the hypothesis that the Crow and Hidatsa were once organized into father-sibs.

The real explanation is, of course, quite different. In his discussion with McLennan, Lewis H. Morgan pointed out the misleading implications of the phrase "kinship through females only." Every

tribe, he showed, regardless of the mode of descent, recognizes kinship in both lines, as their nomenclature clearly demonstrates. Now this purely terminological contention of Morgan's admits of wider application. Not only do people uniformly recognize the existence of bilateral relationships by an appropriate nomenclature, but they further assign definite duties and privileges to both sides of the family. Thus, it happens that the matrilineal Crow show a peculiar regard for the father's clan-mates, while various patronymic tribes assign peculiar functions to the mother's brother. A more thoroughgoing investigation in the field will reveal innumerable social functions dependent on a special type of relationship, patrilineal or matrilineal, by blood or by marriage. The avunculate cannot be appraised rightly except as a special case of a very general tendency to associate definite social relations with definite forms of kinship regardless of maternal or paternal side.

The explanation here offered may be supplemented by discussing one that seems to have commended itself to some legal historians. Thus, Huebner in rejecting the survivalist theory of the avunculate for Germanic law writes:

> . . . the special honor of the maternal-uncle may have been merely a consequence of the fact that the maternal kindred came, in time, to be considered along with the paternal, who were at first exclusively regarded; in other words, a consequence of the fact that the family's purely agnatic structure was replaced by a cognatic organization. In this appearance of the idea of cognatic relationship, which transformed in the same manner the family and the sib . . . , the maternal uncle naturally played the most important rôle: he was the link between the families of the father and the mother, and he was primarily the person upon whom was incumbent, as the representative of the maternal sib, the protection of the wife as against her husband.[50]

My comment on this would simply be that it is unnecessary to assume the sequence from agnatic to cognatic institutions: matronymy is perfectly consistent with the assignment of definite functions to the father's group and patronymy is equally consistent with the avunculate.

This point of view, combined with transmission and the influence of cross-cousin marriage, accounts in my opinion, for the vast majority of recorded avuncular institutions, though I am quite willing to admit that there is a slightly greater probability for the avunculate to be coupled with matronymy than with patronymy. The case might be favorable for a higher degree of correlation if we could disengage instances of borrowing from those where the custom has sprung up

[50] R. Huebner, History of Germanic Private Law, p. 590, 1918.

spontaneously, but this we are unfortunately not able to do except by speculation. Yet even so, the correlation would prove more involved than if the avunculate were simply a corollary of the matronymic institution. That is to say, it is not matronymic tribes, but matronymic tribes of a particular type, that seem to form a favorable soil for the evolution of avuncular customs. The absence of such customs among the Australians and their development in Africa, Melanesia, and the settled tribes of North America indicate that possibly there is a multiple correlation with matronymy *and* a settled mode of existence. On the other hand, it may turn out that matrilocal residence is also largely involved. In short, instead of saying that matrilineal societies tend to give rise to the avuncular usages, we may ultimately come to make the statement that the coefficient of correlation for the avunculate with sedentary tribes that are both matrilineal and matrilocal is .75; that the coefficient for nomadic matrilineal tribes is .05; while for nomadic patrilineal and patrilocal peoples it approximates zero. But these are merely suggestions thrown out to stimulate further research.

It should be noted that the avunculate involves an interesting problem in diffusion. There are certainly very noteworthy resemblances, for example, between the Banks Islands, the Tlingit, and the Bantu forms of the practice. If we assume with the extreme diffusionist school that no cultural feature can arise independently in two distinct parts of the globe, the matter is very simple. In that case we should postulate that the avunculate developed once among the Banks Islanders, for instance, and was thence transmitted to Africa and America and wherever else its observed range of distribution may extend. For all we could tell its origin would be an *accidental* occurrence since *ex hypothesi* it represents a unique phenomenon. No matter what may have been its concomitants we are in no position to manipulate them so as to separate factors that helped from those which hindered its evolution. Any suggestion as to causal connections would thus necessarily remain arbitrary, that is, unamenable to any mode of verification.

The matter stands very differently if we accept the view current in America that similar cultural features *may* arise independently in unconnected areas. In this case an irrepressible logical instinct leads us to posit like conditions as underlying like observed effects. The similarity of avuncular usages in Melanesia and North America then appears as the probable, if not inevitable, consequence of like con-

comitant circumstances, and it becomes the duty of the ethnologist to ascertain what are the significant concomitants. If the avunculate is, mathematically speaking, a function of a series of features including matronymy, its occurrence in geographically and historically distinct communities ceases to puzzle, provided the same correlates are always associated with it. Practically the matter would stand thus. Independent development would be postulated for the disconnected areas of the globe. These would not be determined once and for all time by abstract geographical speculation, nor by general cultural considerations, but *with exclusive reference to the one trait under discussion.* For example, in a certain sense all of the New World forms a cultural unit. But this fact is negligible for the avunculate when we find it among the Haida on the one hand and the Hopi on the other. There is no possible way to account for the absence of the custom in the immense intervening area except to assume that it never existed there. In other words, the Hopi avunculate represents one independent evolution, the Northwest Coast parallel another. When such primary centers become foci for the transmission of the avunculate *without* at the same time transmitting the correlated traits, we are likely to find the observed facts of distribution—great resemblance between disconnected groups sharing certain features besides the avunculate, and the occurrence of the avunculate in other localities which lack all the essential correlates for the independent evolution of the avunculate, but are in geographical proximity to localities that have developed it.

To return to the general problem for a summary of results based on an empirical survey. The theory of a matrilineal society which by some necessity produces out of itself a series of features whose presence in turn may be used to establish the existence of such a society in the present or past is untenable. It ignores two vital groups of empirical phenomena—the frequent absence of the supposed symptoms among undoubtedly matrilineal peoples, and the enormous extent of borrowing, which accounts far more satisfactorily than the survival hypothesis for the occurrence of the avunculate amidst patrilineal institutions. Some degree of correlation between matronymy and matrilocalism or the avunculate may be accepted, but everything points to the conclusion that the connection is a far more intricate one than is commonly supposed. Here again discrimination is a prerequisite to a sane envisaging of the problem. The degree of correlation need not be the same for all of the supposed constituents

of the matrilineal complex; in fact, all probability is to the contrary. For those with whom the a priori plausibility of the matrilineal complex theory in its classical form still weighs heavily, a brief historical retrospect is recommended. The earliest theoretical treatise on matronymy interpreted the feature as a sign of the *matriarchate*. Nothing could have been more plausible; for what more naturally accounts for matrilineal descent than female ascendancy? Yet in the face of a truly overwhelming mass of negative evidence the followers of Bachofen have long ago abandoned the conception of the matriarchate as a necessary or even common correlate of matronymy. In proportion as supposedly matriarchal tribes have become better known, the "mother-rule" has shrunk into certain property rights held by women (Hopi, Khasi), or certain social and political prerogatives (Iroquois). The correlation of these comparatively meager privileges with matronymy may possibly be expressed by a coefficient of .01, though I seriously question whether it is nearly so strong. A priori reasonableness can accordingly not take the place of empirical facts. Let us study what sociological traits are actually linked together, and we shall then have something to contribute to the problem of the matrilineal complex.

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